6: Honigmann E-5 (1943-1945)1954 ND12 Nahane ND12
Upper Liard

in cold weather. The tanning of caribou, goat, and moose hide involved a relatively more complex process to which women devoted considerable time.[5] First the skin needed to be scraped clean of flesh and fat with the aid of a bone fleshing tool. Next greater muscular effort had to be applied in wielding the horn scraper with which to free the hide of hair. The woman then rubbed a mixture of brain and water into the skin and left it to soften.[6] Afterwards the hide must be washed and then twisted or wrung out to remove the excess moisture, dried in the sun, and stretched. Thereupon came the labor of softening, accomplished by scraping the spanned white hide with a long handled stone scraper. A second or third brain soaking and scraping followed. Now the skin could be sewn into a tube loosely closed at the end from which it was suspended for an hour or so over a smudge fire kindled with rotten spruce wood. When the inside had been thoroughly smoked the surfaces were reversed and smoking continued for about another hour. The result appeared in a golden yellow skin which the worker suspended in the sun to dry and then fabricated into containers and tailored clothing. The dried whole skin of a large fish (probably lusha) provided material for a bag widely used to store sewing materials. 281

Line ranked as an indispensable requirement in aboriginal times. Material used in line making included sinew, caribou hide taken at various stages of the tanning process, spruce root, whole willow, willow bark, willow root, and grass. Fish skin, willow bast, and spruce wood do not appear to have provided material for cordage. Sinew line originated along the backbone of a caribou or, in emergencies, from the tendons of mountain sheep and goats. A woman scraped the sinews clean of flesh with a knife and hung them overnight to dry. On the following day she fleced and hoomed a bunch by grasping the upper and lower ends with the hands and rotating the mass in opposite directions. The process separated the individual strands which could then be stored until needed. Before being used the sinew was moistened by drawing individual strands through the mouth thus rendering them soft and pliable. From caribou hide came rawhide, babiche, and smoked (or tanned) skin line. Rawhide designates a skin from which the hair and flesh have been removed but which has not been treated with the brain mixture. Such skin provided a strong cordage difficult to untie once it had dried and hardened. Ordinary babiche (semi-tanned skin) line generally came from the skin of a bull caribou. Bear skin provided the strongest variety of this type of line while mountain sheep skin yielded a particularly fine babiche highly desirable for filling the front and rear panels of moccasins. More often "fine" babiche came from the hide of a cow caribou. Hide to be used in the manufacture of semi-tanned skin cordage had been fleshed, cleaned of hair, and softened. It might be dyed in moose blood if the maker fancied the deep rusty color. Newly cut babiche was stretched between two trees and left to dry for 24 hours 283 D86]

[5] For fairly detailed descriptions of skin working observed in contemporary Kaska setting see Honigmann, *Culture and Ethos of Kaska Society* (1949), 76, 78-79. Skin working among other Northern Athapaskans is illustrated in Lonsdale, *Caribou for Chipewyan* (1949), and the same writer's *Polaris Eskimo* (1949).

[6] The Tlingit (including the Chilkat) used bovine as a tanning substance, while southerly tribes on the coast tended more to use salmon roe and oil. Drucker, *Culture Element Distributions: XXVI, Northwest Coast* (1950), 196.

6: Honigmann E-5 (1943-1945)1954 ND12 Nahane ND12

Upper Liard

larity among the Cassiar Indians. Many garments carried porcupine-quill embroidery and quills were also woven on the bow loom to produce decorative outer belts and headbands. Besides being richly adorned with quills a woman further enhanced her dress with "the hard pellets" obtained from the tripe of moose. Skin fringes enjoyed great popularity, being strung across the shoulders of a man's coat and suspended from the lower edge of the parka. Red earth mixed with a small amount of grease or balsam pitch provided a paint applied with the fingers to clothing. The designs of such painting appeared in pairs, for example on the left and right sides of the ventral surface of the garment. Two common designs, reconstructed from memory by an informant, are indicated in Figure 5. Ground-hog skin sewn to the front of a man's winter parka probably served both for warmth and adornment. Moccasins did not carry a fur trimming. Pieces of bone, painted red and blue (blue-green color confusion obtained among the Kaska as among many American Indians) hung from coats. Blue pigment, obtainable in the vicinity of Folly Banks, was mixed with grease or, to "really make it stick," with balsam

FIG. 5. Painted Designs for Clothing.

pitch. Black paint, the color that completed the aboriginal palette, also came from earth but appears to have been little employed for clothing decoration. Feathers did not find much place in ornament. Shamans wore a feather headdress while engaged in their professional duties and an occasional person sometimes adorned himself by sticking a feather in his hair. Feather-lined wristlets have already been mentioned.

We come now to adornment worn directly on or in the skin. Men made porcupine-quill necklaces, the quills being dyed by wives and sweethearts. Such necklaces were frequently provided with pendants hanging down in front of the body. The wrists of women carried bracelets of smoked skin decorated with porcupine-quill embroidery, while moose and caribou teeth were much fancied for necklaces. Both sexes wore quill headbands. The ear lobes of older girls and women were weighted with plugs carved from bone but no ornaments penetrated the bella. In the lower lip a woman often inserted a labret made of a small piece of fish bone.* A woman's brother-in-law frequently performed the operation that pierced the skin for these ornaments. In the process he pinched the soft flesh in a "wooden frame" (apparently consisting simply of two pieces of wood). The vise remained in place overnight and prevented the blood from flowing into the lip. Next morning the flesh was punctured and balsam pitch applied to forestall

* Among the Tlingit bone labrets in the lower lip were "a sign of womanhood" and their use was restricted to women of the upper class. The piercing of children's ears was celebrated with a potlatch. Both sexes wore nose rings. Stevenson, *Some Notes on Southeastern Alaska and its People* (1893), 82; Jones, *A Study of the Tlingits of Alaska* (1914), 66-67; Drucker, *Culture Element Distributions: XXVI, Northwest Coast* (1948), 198.